

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 271417Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4614
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, IS , LE
SUBJECT: ADF MOVE ON NABATIYAH--FURTHER ISRAELI REACTION

REF: TEL AVIV 0611

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY GOI LEADERSHIP ON THE MOVE-
MENT OF ARAB FORCES INTO THE NABATIYAH AREA CONTINUE
TO BE FEW BUT FIRM. IDF CHIEF OF STAFF GUR TOLD A
GROUP OF ISRAEL BONDS SUPPORTERS JANUARY 27 THAT
"THE LEBANESE QUESTION TODAY IS QUITE HOT, AND THAT
IS WHY I AM NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT IT." ISRAEL RADIO
REPORTED THE ISRAEL-LEBANESE BORDER TO BE QUIET, BUT
QUOTED "AN ISRAELI SOURCE" AS VIEWING THE ENTRY OF
SYRIAN FORCES INTO NABATIYAH TO BE OF "AN EXCEEDINGLY
SERIOUS NATURE" AND "A THREAT TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY."
ISRAEL IS DEMANDING THAT SYRIAN FORCES PULL OUT
OF NABATIYAH, THE SOURCE REPORTEDLY SAID. AN
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ADDITIONAL COMMENT BY AN ISRAELI LEADER CAME
JANUARY 26 WHEN MK YITZHAK NAVON, CHAIRMAN OF THE
KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEE,
TOLD THE JERUSALEM ECONOMIC CLUB THAT "IT IS CLEAR
THAT SYRIAN INTENTIONS ARE TO DESCEND TO THE SOUTH
AND THUS ENDANGER THE ISRAELI BORDER...I AM CON-
VINCED THAT THE GENERAL OPINION WILL BE THAT WE WILL

NOT BE ABLE TO ENDURE SUCH A SITUATION...BECAUSE
OUR CREDIBILITY IS AT STAKE."

2. CREDIBILITY WAS ALSO THE THEME OF A HAARETZ
EDITORIAL WHICH STATES THAT THE ADF PRESENCE AT
NABATIYAH CONTRADICTS THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HAD
PREVAILED, IN SOME FORM OR OTHER, BETWEEN THE
WASHINGTON-DAMASCUS-JERUSALEM TRIANGLE. WASHINGTON
MIST SEE TO IT THAT THE STATUS QUO WHICH HAD PRE-
VAILED UNTIL THREE DAYS AGO IS RESTORED. WHAT IS
BEING PUT TO THE TEST NOW IS THE CREDIBILITY OF
WASHINGTON, NO LESS AND PERHAPS EVEN MORE THAN THAT
OF JERUSALEM, HAARETZ CONCLUDED.

3. HAARETZ UNDERPINS ITS EDITORIAL WITH A REPORT
BY DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT MATTI GOLAN, WHO WRITES
THAT ISRAEL YESTERDAY (JANUARY 26) ASKED THAT THE
U.S. TAKE SWIFT AND UNEQUIVOCAL ACTION TO ENSURE
THAT THE SYRIANS PULL OUT OF NABATIYAH--AFTER
SIGNS OF HESITATION WERE NOTICED IN THE U.S.
APPROACH. WHILE WASHINGTON HAD AGREED WITH ISRAEL
JANUARY 25 THAT THE SYRIAN MOVE WAS A GRAVE ONE,
THE AMERICANS ACCEPTED THE SYRIAN PRESENCE AT
NABATIYAH AND ASKED JERUSALEM TO PERMIT POLITICAL
MEANS TO BE EXPLORED TO END THE AFFAIR. THERE IS
INCREASING CONCERN IN JERUSALEM THAT EVERY DAY
WHICH PASSES COULD ADD TO THE LEGITIMIZATION OF
A SYRIAN PRESENCE IN NABATIYAH. ALTHOUGH IT IS
ASSUMED THAT THE CRISIS WILL END WITHIN A VERY
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SHORT TIME, JERUSALEM IS CLEARLY INCLINED TO ACT,
USING OTHER THAN POLITICAL MEANS IF THOSE FAIL.

4. A SIMILAR THEME IS SOUNDED IN AN ARTICLE IN
YEDIOT AHARONOT (HABER), IN WHICH THE SYRIAN EX-
ERCISE AT NABATIYAH IS SEEN AS A KIND OF TRIAL BALLOON.
THIS HAS BEEN DULY NOTED IN JERUSALEM, AND WITH
THIS IN MIND ISRAEL'S VIGOROUS STAND ON THIS ISSUE
MUST BE UNDERSTOOD. ALL THAT IS LEFT NOW IS TO
WATCH AND SEE HOW SYRIA GOES ON WITH THE EXERCISE--SHE MAY
DECIDE TO SAY THAT THIS BATTALION WAS ONLY MEANT TO
POLICE THE REGION FOR A SHORT PERIOD, AND TO COLLECT
THE TERRORISTS' WEAPONS, AT THE CONCLUSION OF WHICH
THE TROOPS WILL RETURN TO THEIR BASES FARTHER AWAY
FROM ISRAEL'S BORDERS. STILL, IT MIGHT BE AS WELL
TO BE PREPARED FOR GRAVER EVENTUALITIES.

5. YEDIOT ALSO CARRIES A REPORT (KIVITI) THAT THE
U.S. APPROACHED THE SOVIET UNION JANUARY 26 TO

ASK THE RUSSIANS TO EXERCISE THEIR INFLUENCE ON
THE SYRIANS. CITING U.S. SOURCES IN WASHINGTON,
THE ARTICLE REPORTS THAT THE AMERICAN REQUEST IS
ON THE DESK OF KREMLIN LEADERS. END UNCLASSIFIED

6. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

COMMENT: GIVEN THE SWIFT CONSENSUS

HERE THAT BOTH ISRAEL AND THE U.S. ARE FACING A

TEST OF CREDIBILITY, WHO ARE WE TO DISAGREE? BUT

IN VIEW OF THE REPORTED QUIET ON THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE

BORDER, PERHAPS THE TEST IS AS MUCH OF WASHINGTON-

JERUSALEM LINES AS OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS.

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